

Overdrive improves WordPerfect

Does filling out forms and producing documents take up too much time and talent in your office?

If so, here's a new computer tool that will help get you out from under a lot of that paperwork.

Overdrive, just released by TurboSoft of Cleveland at \$99.95, works with WordPerfect word processing software — and improves upon its mail-merge function — to prepare up to 20 different letters, forms and contracts at the same time with the same set of customizing data.

I found Overdrive's concept appealing for certain types of office situations. It will work especially well for legal offices and personnel departments where repetitive forms and letters are a way of life.

Here's how it works:

■ Say you have a new hire, and you need to prepare a letter of confirmation, an employment agreement, a confidentiality agreement, letters of introduction to management and other departments, and even the envelopes. First you select the specific documents to be printed from the program's ample

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library of standard business letters and agreements.

■ Next, you enter the variable data by filling out computer screen that's generated by the program.

■ Finally, the program merges the variable data with all the forms and prints them out for you. A key advantage is that by using a fixed data set to generate many documents, the chances for error or discrepancies between them are eliminated.

Overdrive make this type of repetitive document creation a piece of cake, right down to creating a Federal Express bill.

The software includes 50 general business agreements, from general partnership agreements to promissory notes, all of which can be tailored for your company. All together, there's room for 1,250 different forms.

Despite its benefits, however, Overdrive has some negative features that you should consider. This is expected with the first version of any new software, and I anticipate that they will be cleared up when the next version is released.

First, conflict with other programs was a problem on my computer, a PS/2 Model 50. Overdrive wouldn't run on my machine until I removed all other memory-resident programs. This may or may not be a problem on your computer.

Second, Overdrive lacks some important features that would make it easier to use. For example, if you're sending papers to several different people, and you forget one document, you must start from scratch and re-enter all the information. There's no easy way to save what you entered and then apply the data to another form.

And most important, you can't save your mailing list in a data file. The best you can do is save each person's data combined with documents in a separate file. That makes it impossible to go back eas-

ily and retrieve all the names and addresses from the mailing to do a follow up mailing.

Also, there's no way to pull in data from another mailing list or data base program into Overdrive. A TurboSoft representative said this is high on their priority list for future editions.

Nonetheless, for a lot of offices, this program is a breakthrough and represents a major improvement over WordPerfect's mail-merge features.

The bottom line: If you use WordPerfect and need to ease the time and energy necessary for repetitive documents, buy this software. Even with its omissions, it's excellent for legal offices and personnel departments. But if your need is less immediate, hold out for the next version.

Hillel Segal's previous Computer column now has been broadened to include evaluations of gadgets, seminars and books designed to enhance business productivity. Segal is a management consultant based in Boulder.